The Cloisters

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

THE CLOISTERS

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

THE CLOISTERS

A BRIEF GUIDE

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NEW YORK
MCMXXVI

PREFACE

IN JUNE, 1925, The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired by purchase from the sculptor, George Grey Barnard, the collection of mediaeval art and the building and grounds on Fort Washington Avenue known as The Cloisters, where the collection had been installed by Mr. Barnard. The purchase was made possible by a munificent gift to the Museum for this purpose from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who also provided generously for the maintenance of the collection. A subsequent gift from Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller added to The Cloisters a large group of mediaeval sculptures from the donor's collection.

As a branch of the Metropolitan Museum, The Cloisters opened to the public on May 4, 1926. In the interval between the purchase and the opening of The Cloisters, nearly a thousand objects were photographed and catalogued; the collection was rearranged in part; a new entrance gate and a house for the heating plant were constructed; the paths in the grounds were flagged, and the Cuxa cloister garden laid out.

Information concerning admission, assistance in studying the collection, and permits for copying and photographing will be found on pages 57–58.

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GUIDE TO THE CLOISTERS

Introduction

THE history of the collection brought together by George Grey Barnard can be only briefly summarized here. Related in full it would be one of the most fascinating stories in the chronicles of collecting. About twenty years ago, during one of his many long sojourns in France, Mr. Barnard first conceived the idea of acquiring a few examples of Gothic sculpture for the instruction and enjoyment of his pupils in New York. As a sculptor Mr. Barnard realized how important it was that young students should have before them examples of the great sculpture of the mediaeval period, then but scantily represented in this country in either public or private collections. As time went on, Mr. Barnard's idea became more ambitious—nothing less than the creation of a museum of mediaeval art, unpretentiously but appropriately housed in a building and grounds of its own, where the collection would be freely available to all.

His purse did not permit him, save on rare occasions, to buy second hand from the big dealers in European capitals, so he became a discoverer himself. Taking as a center of operation the site of some ruined abbey or church, he would visit the farms in the neighborhood, for he had observed that the peasants often made use of the debris to serve for one purpose or another on their farms. A pigsty might yield

the slab of a crusader's tomb, or an attic some forgotten statue that once had graced an altar or church portal.

The collection thus assembled is one of exceptional interest. It includes many works of art of the very first order, but naturally it is not composed wholly of masterpieces. What collection is? On the other hand, in the sympathetic surroundings created by Mr. Barnard, each work of art is encouraged to reveal the full measure of its beauty. For those to whom the ideal museum is a collection of labels illustrated by specimens, The Cloisters will be a disappointment. Here is no lifeless aggregation of "typical examples," so classified, so ticketed that the gentle voice of beauty is lost in the drone of erudition. On the contrary, The Cloisters is a shrine, where mediaeval art is not so much on exhibition as at home.

The Close

Entering the gate from the street the visitor puts away the city and thoughts of the city and is for a time in some isolated monastery of the old world. The path meanders through a casual garden, shadowed by old trees and made bright by flowering shrubs. Here and there are time-worn sculptures, such, for example, as the scenes of the Passion of our Lord, French stone-carvings of the sixteenth century, set into the north wall of the close.

Before the building, a little way removed, rises a great pointed arch upon massive stone piers. This is all that remains of a wayside shrine which once stood

on the crest of a hill, called Montault, near Avignon, where it sheltered an ancient cross. In the fourteenth century pilgrims traveling the road from Avignon to Villeneuve stopped there for prayer and rest. One old chronicler says that the clergy of Avignon generally accompanied pilgrims on their journey as far as the Belle Croix of Montault. According to tradition the cross was erected by a traveler in gratitude for his miraculous rescue from robbers on that spot.

The Belle Croix was dismantled by the Huguenots in 1576, and many of the stones were carried away by acquisitive peasants in the seventeenth century. The shrine was originally a four-sided structure, twenty-five or thirty feet high, open on each side, and composed of four high, pointed arches, surmounted by a pyramidal roof with eight spires. The ceiling of the interior was vaulted; below the arches were eight niches containing statues. Through the years the edifice was neglected, the stone cross disintegrated, and this lone arch was left standing silhouetted against the sky until it was taken down stone by stone and transported here. Judging from these remains, the shrine was built in the fifteenth century, replacing an earlier structure.

We pass through this arch and stand before a low brick building (fig. 1). Across the front, on either side of the central portal, extends an arcade of three arches with marble capitals from a destroyed cloister in the neighborhood of Saint-Gaudens (see page 38). Standing in these arcades are two French stone statues of the Virgin and Child; one of the fourteenth, the other of the early sixteenth century. The round-

arched, French Romanesque doorway, composed in part of more recent voussoirs, is particularly interesting for the sculpture of the capitals, representing animals, monstrous and real, combined with foliage.

The Interior of the Building

One enters a dimly lighted room suggestive of a small mediaeval church, approximately cruciform in shape with a high altar to the east, and divided into a western and an eastern half by a brick screen. For convenience we may call the western half, formed by the arcades from the cloister of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, the nave (fig. 2). The balcony corresponds to a triforium, and the galleries beneath to aisles. In the eastern half are the transepts, the chancel with the high altar, the sacristy, and a passageway leading to the Cuxa cloister. This guide will first describe the sculptures in the nave. The south or right transept is then considered, followed by the chancel, the sacristy, and the north transept. The triforium is next in order. This is followed by a description of the exhibits in the galleries beneath the balcony and in the passageway leading to the Cuxa cloister, with an account of which the guide concludes.

The Nave

Forming three sides of the nave, or western half of the building, an arcade composed of sculptured capitals and other remains from the cloister of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert first attracts the visitor's attention. The cloister, a development of the Roman impluvium or open court, was a customary adjunct of cathedral,

FIG. 1. THE ENTRANCE

collegiate, and monastic churches. It consisted of a garth, rectangular in plan—at least approximately so—surrounded by four arcaded galleries. On one side of the cloister, generally the north, was the church; on the others were such buildings as the chapter house, the refectory, and dormitories. It was a place for prayer and meditation and for exercise in inclement weather. In large religious communities there might be more than one cloister.

In The Cloisters collection are parts of four mediaeval cloisters. Of exceptional interest is the series of late Romanesque sculptures from Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, incorporated in the arcade supporting the balcony. The celebrated Benedictine monastery of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, situated in the wild and lonely gorge of Gellone in the department of the Hérault (southeastern France), was founded in 804 by Guillaume au Court Nez, Duke of Aquitaine, who was one of Charlemagne's paladins and, according to some historians, a close relative of the Emperor. In 806 Duke William retired to the abbey of Gellone, as it was then called, and six years later died there in the odor of sanctity.

The abbey, better known as Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert from the twelfth century on, became one of the most important in southern France. It possessed a famous relic of the True Cross that Charlemagne had received from the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 800 and had given to Saint-Guilhem. Saint William-in-the-Desert was one of the regular stops on the pilgrimage road from Toulouse to Compostella. In 1165 a visit to this venerable shrine was included among the

FIG. 2. INTERIOR LOOKING WEST, SHOWING THE NAVE

seven minor pilgrimages that were imposed as penance upon the Albigensian heretics. The abbey was richly endowed, having numerous possessions not only in various parts of France, but in Spain and Portugal as well.

In the wars of religion Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert suffered at the hands of the Calvinists, who took the

FIG. 3. ROMANESQUE CAPITAL FROM SAINT-GUILHEM-LE-DÉSERT

abbey in 1568. But the principal destruction occurred during the French Revolution, when the monastery was sold as national property, and the cloister demolished except for part of a lower gallery, still existing. The abbey church, however, was left intact. It shows evidence of having been built at various times. The oldest part, presumably replacing a primitive edifice, dates from the first half or middle of the eleventh century. At the end of that century, perhaps at the beginning of the next, the church was enlarged by the addition of transepts and a new apse. The older part of the cloister appears to have been built at this time.

Between 1165 and 1199 a narthex was added to the church. At some time during the last third of the twelfth century and possibly the first years of the thirteenth, a new ambulatory was constructed above

FIG. 4. CAPITALS FROM SAINT-GUILHEM-LE-DÉSERT

the earlier one-storied cloister. A document of 1206, mentioning a "new cloister," refers presumably to these superimposed galleries. Both ambulatories were arcaded.

The architectural fragments from Saint-Guilhem come, no doubt, from these upper galleries. In style they are related to the school of Provence. They are notable examples of the finest French architectural

sculpture in the fully developed Romanesque style. Indeed, some of the carvings are perhaps more properly described as Gothic. Certain capitals with rather naturalistic foliage and the dramatic "Hell" capital[1]

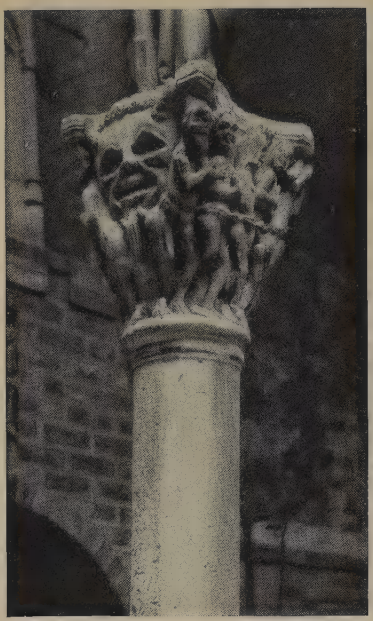


FIG. 5. THE "HELL" CAPITAL, FRENCH, EARLY GOTHIC

[1] The "Hell" capital is said by some authorities to have come not from Saint-Guilhem but from the nearby abbey of Aniane. It is possible that other sculptures described as coming from Saint-Guilhem may have the same origin. These cloister fragments were formerly in a private collection at Aniane which is described in a local guide as including colonnettes, capitals, friezes, shields, etc., "provenant principalement des Abbayes de Aniane et de Saint-Guilhem." The abbey of Aniane, founded at the end of the eighth century, was a large and important community in the neighborhood of Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert; it was ruined by the Protestants in the sixteenth century, but rebuilt.

FIG. 6. PILASTER
FROM SAINT-GUILHEM

may easily date from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

But it is time now to turn our attention to the sculptures themselves. Foliage motives predominate in the decoration of these elaborately carved capitals and abaci. Many of the capitals, of Corinthian type, are sheathed with curling acanthus leaves, crisply conventionalized. Around one, however, the acanthus sweeps in bold spirals (fig. 3). Another capital is closely patterned with the flat, heart-shaped leaves of the black bryony vine (fig. 4). A third is covered with a lacework of vine leaves and tendrils. No less beautiful are the abaci, ornamented with a profusion of vines and other foliage motives, amidst which are introduced fruits, birds, human and animal heads. Across one abacus winds a ribbon in angular folds recalling a Greek fret pattern.

Especially notable are two carved columns standing on the screen that marks the eastern end of the nave. One is decorated with broad acanthus leaves in low, flat relief. The other would seem to be a conventionalized rendering of the trunk of a palm tree. A third column, ornamented with an intricate chevron design, may be seen in the colonnade on the south side of the nave. One of the undecorated columns on the screen supports the "Hell" capital previously mentioned (fig. 5). This is a masterpiece of mediaeval sculpture representing the terrific countenance of Satan and sinners led in chains to the mouth of Hell. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple is represented on another capital. The Massacre of the Innocents is the subject of a third.

Near the staircase leading to the balcony are other sculptures from Saint-Guilhem, including one of the finest pieces of Romanesque decorative sculpture in the collection, a pilaster (fig. 6) decorated with acanthus spirals. The deep undercutting gives a brilliant play of light and shade to the carving. Above is a fine late Gothic relief representing the Vision of Saint Hubert; it is French, of about 1500.

FIG. 7. TOMB EFFIGY OF ABOUT 1300

Imbedded in the floor at the western angles of the Saint-Guilhem arcade are fragments of two funerary monuments. To the left, as the visitor faces the entrance, is a fragment of a Merovingian sarcophagus of about the sixth century, not improbably part of the ancient sarcophagus, now ruined, in which Saint-Guilhem was buried. Corresponding on the right is an engraved slab that marked, according to the inscription, the burial place of the entrails of Blanche († 1393), the daughter of Charles IV of France and the wife of Philippe of Valois, first Duke of Orléans.

In the center of the nave, upon an improvised brick

tomb, is a remarkable stone effigy (fig. 7) of a mediaeval knight, one of the most important sculptures in the collection. He is shown bareheaded, clad in chain mail, and bearing the shield and sword of his warring days. This is probably not a portrait of the man whose tomb it adorned, but one of the stock effigies showing the deceased at the age of thirty-three, the age at which Christ died, and the age assumed by the blessed upon entering Heaven. The style of this beautiful French sculpture indicates a date around 1300.

Set into the walls above the arcades of the Saint-Guilhem cloister are wood-carvings of the Coronation of the Virgin and the Flight into Egypt, and English alabasters of the Nottingham School, depicting scenes such as the Nativity, the Entombment, and the Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence. From the nave, the fourteenth-century French statue of the Virgin and Child (see page 39), standing above the entrance, beneath one of the arches of the triforium, is seen to best advantage.

Coming now to the statues placed upon the screen to the east of the Saint-Guilhem arcade, we note at the extreme left an early sixteenth-century stone statue of Saint James the Great, wearing a pilgrim's hat with a cockle-shell on the brim. Next is Saint Barbara; in her hand she held originally a miniature tower of which only a part now remains. This attribute recalls the legend that she was imprisoned in a tower by her pagan father to protect her from the world. While confined there she became converted to Christianity. To symbolize the Christian Trinity she had workmen cut three windows in the tower. Her father, discover-

ing her conversion, was about to kill her, when she was carried by angels to a place of safety. Next her is Saint Nicholas of Myra. An innkeeper, unable to supply travelers with food during a famine, stole children, killed, and pickled them; but Saint Nicholas made the sign of the Cross over the pickling vat and restored the children to life. In accordance with this legend he is here represented with the children in a tub. These two statues of Saint Barbara and Saint Nicholas are French sculptures of the fifteenth century.

Mounted on columns are two pairs of angels. The two nearer the outer walls are French, of the late fifteenth century; they hold symbols of the Passion. The angels on either side of the passageway are delightful examples of French polychromed wood-carving of the thirteenth century. On the right screen is a French Virgin of the fourteenth century, and a late fifteenth-century French statue of a sainted bishop. On the column near the pulpit is a French, fourteenth-century statue of the Virgin and Child. An early Gothic wood-carving of the Virgin giving breast to the Christ-child may be noted on the front of the pulpit, which is composed of various fragments of linen-fold paneling and carved beams. The pulpit ends the triforium gallery on this side of the nave.

The South Transept

Leaving the nave and turning to the right, the visitor now proceeds to the south transept (fig. 8). Here is the incised tomb slab of Thomas de Germegni, chaplain of the Chapel of Saint Ladre (Laza-

rus) of Miaur (Meaux), who died in 1342. The deceased is represented in his priestly vestments. Occupying the middle of the south wall, beneath a stained-glass window, is a structure resembling a mediaeval tomb supported on columns. It is composed of various unrelated sculptures. On the front of the altar are two French, sixteenth-century stone reliefs of the Descent from the Cross and Christ Appearing to the Magdalen. These scenes of the Passion are part of the series shown on the north wall of the close (see page 4). Above these reliefs are two fragmentary sculptures, half-figures from an Entombment group. They represent two of the Holy Women weeping over the body of Christ. They appear to be the work of the so-called "sculptor of the Saint Martha statue," and are characteristic productions of the school of Troyes of about 1525–30. The two reliefs on the front of the superstructure are presumably fragments of an altarpiece. They show the Emperor Heraclius recovering from Chosroës II the fragment of the True Cross given to Jerusalem by the Empress Helena, which the Persian king had seized; Heraclius returning the sacred relic to Jerusalem; and the Crucifixion, with two kneeling personages in the foreground. These fourteenth-century sculptures are particularly interesting for the illustration of contemporaneous armor. Above are two polychromed wood statues, French work of the fourteenth century, representing Saint John the Beloved Disciple. The attitude, expressive of grief, indicates that these figures originally formed part of Crucifixion groups.

On the right is a finely polychromed French wood-

FIG. 8. THE "TOMB" IN THE SOUTH TRANSEPT

carving of the fifteenth century. As the feet are bare the figure is probably intended for one of the Apostles. Corresponding on the left is a Pietà (fig. 9), in polychromed wood. The Pietà was a popular theme in the fifteenth century when religious art had lost much of

FIG. 9. PIETA, GOTHIC WOOD-CARVING

its earlier idealism and strove more to stir the emotions than to give moral and doctrinal instruction. This tragic group, notable for the beauty of the sorrowing Virgin who holds the rigid body of Christ in her arms, is probably a French sculpture of the early fifteenth century.

Lacking any dramatic appeal but delightful in its blithe tranquillity is the French fourteenth-century

statue of the Virgin and Child, found in an old garden in the neighborhood of Dijon, which is shown nearby.

The visitor comes now to a large fresco painting (fig. 10), set in a wall-recess beneath a pointed arch. The Savior is depicted standing in the tomb with

FIG. 10. CHRIST IN THE TOMB
TUSCAN FRESCO

arms extended as if to recall His sufferings on the Cross, which is indicated behind Him. This impressive painting is by some fourteenth-century Italian artist whose style derives from Giotto through Orcagna. Above the recess are a stone-carving of the Crucifixion, a window filled with stained glass, and two panel paintings from a series of the Twelve Apostles. These fifteenth-century Spanish paintings

with gold backgrounds elaborately tooled are highly decorative in character. Other panels of this set are shown in the chancel and elsewhere.[1] Over the narrow doorway of the passage leading to the Cuxa cloister (see page 46) is a charming French statue of the fourteenth century representing Our Lady offering her breast to the Christ-child.

In front of the high altar, set in the floor between the two transepts, is a fourteenth-century tomb slab, engraved and inlaid with effigies of Clement de Longroy and his wife, Beatrice de Pons. Nearby is a Gothic lectern of carved wood. On either side of the chancel entrance (fig. 11) are two stone statues of distinguished character. The statue on the right, Our Lady holding the Christ-child on her arm, is one of the finest French sculptures of the fourteenth century in the collection (fig. 12). Characteristic of this period are the elaborate treatment of the drapery, the graceful pose, and the tenderness of expression. The corresponding statue on the left, a French sculpture of the fourteenth century, represents Saint Anne holding the Virgin and Child. Both statues retain part of their original polychrome decoration.

The Chancel

Placed upon the altar, beneath a canopy of gilded wood, is an exquisitely beautiful statue in wood of the enthroned Virgin and Child (fig. 13). This carving, which preserves its original polychromy and gilding, is a masterpiece of French sculpture of the

[1] Chancel arch, triforium, galleries under triforium.

FIG. 11. THE CHANCEL ARCH

early fourteenth century. It is flanked on either side by portions of a Spanish, fifteenth-century painted altarpiece. The windows behind the altar are set

FIG. 12. VIRGIN AND CHILD, XIV CENTURY

with stained glass. On either side of the altar are reliquary busts and panel paintings. The subjects embroidered on the late Gothic altar-frontal are the Entombment, the Resurrection, and the Harrowing of Hell.

FIG. 13. VIRGIN AND CHILD
ON THE ALTAR

A passage left of the chancel leads to the sacristy.

The Sacristy

Here, placed against the north wall, is a large wooden cross upon which hangs a twelfth-century torso, in carved and painted wood, of the crucified Christ (fig. 14). Although incomplete, the extraordinary beauty of this sculpture is compelling. The style is truly monumental. It is representative of French Romanesque sculpture of the mid-twelfth century at its best. Seen in the tempered light of stained glass this torso is easily completed by the imagination. We see the head bowed down, encircled with the kingly crown and majestic still in death, the sagging arms, the slightly bending knees. The humanity of Christ is beginning to be stressed in art, His agony on the cross to find presentment; but we are yet far from the painful realism of late Gothic art. The Romanesque Christ is always divine.

Beneath the arms of the cross are the customary figures of the mourning Virgin and Saint John the Disciple. These wood-carvings in high relief are Italian sculptures of the thirteenth century. The attitudes are traditional. These carvings are more interesting for the pattern made by the long drapery folds and the sweeping lines of the silhouettes than for any appeal to the emotions. The marble capitals beneath this group come from the Romanesque cloister of the abbey of Saint Michael at Cuxa (see page 48). Another figure of Saint John, originally part of a Crucifixion group, may be noted near the entrance to the sacristy. This polychromed and gilded wood-carving

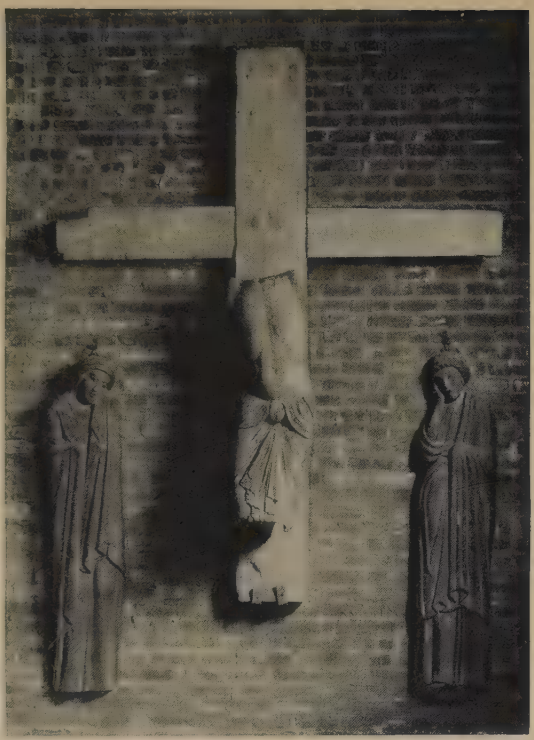


FIG. 14. ROMANESQUE TORSO OF CHRIST WITH THE VIRGIN AND SAINT JOHN

is probably Spanish, of the thirteenth century. It brings a note of rich color to the somber room dominated by the great Romanesque torso.

In the passageway to the sacristy a remarkable fourteenth-century statue of the Virgin and Child, shown in a niche, should not be overlooked.

The North Transept

A round arch resting on massive capitals and pillars forms the entrance to the north transept. The capitals and shafts as well as the fragments of ornamental carving set in the brickwork above the arch come from the ruins of the ancient Catalan abbey of Saint Michael at Cuxa (see pages 48–55). Other fragments from the same provenance compose the large cross (fig. 15) which faces the visitor on entering the transept. Some of these blocks of rose-colored marble, carved with grotesque animal and other ornamental motives, appear to have been originally part of a cross. Others come presumably from the sculptured decoration of the portals at Cuxa. This was the destination no doubt of a panel with an angel and the Agnus Dei, carved in relief, which is shown behind the painted panel in the recess on the right. Other fragments from Cuxa ornament the niche above the first landing of the stairs to the triforium. Also from Cuxa are the four, elaborately carved, white marble capitals of the Corinthian type, disposed on either side of the cross. These carvings are assigned to the twelfth century.

On the left of the cross is an altar composed of fragments of Romanesque stonework. The altar-frontal

FIG. 15. THE CUXA CROSS

above represents the Virgin and Child enthroned in a mandorla with four Apostles on either side. The design is executed in low relief in gesso, painted and gilded. It is a rare Catalan work of the twelfth century, from Esterri de Cardós. On the altar is a small

FIG. 16. SAINT ELEU THERIUS, FRENCH, XIV CENTURY

Pietà group with Saint Nicholas and Saint James the Great, a Burgundian sculpture of the fifteenth century.

On the wall behind the cross are two statues of the Virgin. The one on the left, a polychromed wood-carving, exemplifies a type not uncommon in French sculpture of the Romanesque period. The Virgin is

seated holding the Christ-child on her knees. Here there is nothing of the tender, human relation between mother and child which is rendered so exquisitely by

FIG. 17. SAINT DENIS, FRENCH, XV CENTURY

the later Gothic sculptor. Majestically enthroned, the Virgin is the Empress of Heaven ceremoniously presenting her Divine Son for the adoration of His subjects.

The statue of the seated Virgin on the right, carved in black marble except for the face, which is a sepa-

rate piece of white marble, is probably a Flemish sculpture of about 1400. The statue may have been completed originally by a figure of the Christ-child seated on the Virgin's knees. It would thus have resembled in type the Romanesque Virgin and Child just described. Since this type had long been out of fashion when the black marble statue was carved, it is not improbable, if our surmise is correct, that the statue reproduces in its general composition some particularly venerated Byzantine or Romanesque sculpture, black with the smoke of countless candles—some "vierge noire," as images of this kind were called.

Pivoted in a niche, where it may be turned to show both sides, is a painted panel, part of a large Spanish altarpiece of the fourteenth century.

The east wall of the transept and the arched recess communicating with the sacristy are devoted to Saint Denis. High up, under a gilded canopy, is a fourteenth-century French statue of this patron saint of France, who suffered martyrdom through decapitation. Another statue (fig. 17) of the Saint, also French but of the late fifteenth century, stands in the arched opening below. Flanking this sculpture are two small statues in painted stone, identical in composition, representing Saint Eleutherius, wearing a dalmatic and holding his severed head in his hands (fig. 16). Saint Eleutherius, a deacon, was one of the two companions of Saint Denis who underwent martyrdom at the same time and in the same manner as Saint Denis. These two statues, which have a blithe, naïve charm, are evidently by the same hand or from the same atelier as the statue of Saint Denis

shown under the canopy above. If the three originally formed a group, it is possible that one of the statues of Saint Eleutherius was intended to represent Saint Rusticus, the other companion of Saint Denis. Properly, however, Saint Rusticus should be represented wearing a chasuble, as he is said to have been a priest; the dalmatic is the characteristic vestment, not of a priest, but of a deacon.

A visit to the triforium or balcony is next in order. The stairs are on the right as we leave the north transept.

The Triforium

On the right of the staircase (fig. 18) to the balcony is a late Gothic stone statue of the Virgin and Child. Of greater interest is the statue above, a French stone sculpture of the fourteenth century, showing the graceful pose and charming, if affected, cascading of the drapery folds typical of this period. Also of the fourteenth century, but recalling in its massive simple forms the earlier Romanesque style, is a stone statue, possibly Spanish in origin, of Saint Anthony the Hermit, which stands on the staircase parapet.

In the niche above the first flight of stairs is a small Romanesque statue of the Virgin enthroned. The large panel painting represents Saint John the Baptist. This painting is the central part of a fifteenth-century Catalan altarpiece, of which the Visitation, hanging to the left, is another part. Opposite is a stone-carving in low relief representing a pope (Saint Sylvester?) holding the symbolic keys

and a model of a church. This sculpture is French, of the fourteenth century. Nearby is a charming little group of Our Lady attended by two angels, a French work of the early sixteenth century.

The subject of the Italian panel painting at the head of the staircase, hanging above some Cuxa fragments, is the Adoration of the Shepherds. It is an attractive Sienese painting of the fourteenth century. Surmounting one of the staircase piers is a life-size statue in carved wood of Saint Roch, a French sculpture of the early sixteenth century, which is said to have come from the Cathedral of Cherbourg. Saint Roch, patron saint of prisoners and the sick, especially the plague-stricken, is represented showing the sores on his legs to a dog. Legend relates that the Saint, falling ill with this dread disease, was succored by his little dog who brought him daily a loaf of bread from the city.

The chief feature of the triforium is the arcade composed of twenty white marble capitals of the late fifteenth century supported by marble shafts and bases (of which only a few, however, are old). Seventeen of these double capitals came originally from the cloister of the Carmelite monastery at Trie, in the south of France The other three may have come from the monastery of Saint-Sever at Rustan. The capitals from the cloister at Trie were carved between 1484 and 1490. The earlier date is established by the fact that one of the capitals (No. 18 counting from the staircase) is carved with the arms of Catharine, Queen of Navarre and Countess of Bigorre, quartering the arms of her husband, Jean d'Albret. The capi-

FIG. 18. THE STAIRCASE AND NORTH TRANSEPT

tal could not have been carved before the date of the marriage on June 14, 1484. The later date, 1490, is determined by a capital (not in The Cloisters) which bears an inscription referring to Pierre I, Cardinal of Foix, who died in 1490, as then alive.

The monastery at Trie was demolished by the Huguenots in 1571. Shortly after the destruction, some of the sculptured capitals of the Trie cloister were sold to the neighboring Benedictine convent of Saint-Sever at Rustan (also demolished by the Huguenots) for the rebuilding of its cloister. Forty-eight of these "transplanted" capitals were sold in 1890 to the city of Tarbes, and re-erected there in the Jardin Massey. The capitals which remained at Trie, less than half the original number of eighty-one, found their way eventually into private hands.

Numerous coats of arms, perpetuating the names of local families of importance who had helped in the erection of the cloister, will be observed on these capitals (fig. 19), and are indicative of the secularization of the arts in the late Gothic period. Grotesque subjects are common, but the carvers have not neglected the traditional scenes from the Bible and legends of the saints, such as the Creation of Adam and Eve; the Sacrifice of Isaac; the Annunciation; the Massacre of the Innocents (fig 20); Christ's Temptation; the story of Lazarus; Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak; the Stoning of Saint Stephen; and Saint George Delivering the Princess from the Dragon.

Opposite the arcade, against the walls of the balcony, are placed several finely carved, double capitals of white marble, with columns and bases. These are

FIG. 19. THE GALLERY WITH CAPITALS FROM TRIE

excellent examples of French decorative sculpture of the fourteenth century (fig. 21). The ornament consists mainly of conventionalized foliage motives, but is varied with human and grotesque masks and with coats of arms. These capitals form part of a series

FIG. 20. CAPITAL FROM TRIE
MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

from the cloister of a destroyed monastery at or near Saint-Gaudens (Haute-Garonne) in southern France.

Near the head of the staircase is an entertaining little sculpture of the fifteenth century, probably from Lorraine, representing the Virgin holding the Christ-child and turning with Him the pages of a book. Between the Saint-Gaudens columns are two statues of the Magdalen, both French; one showing the characteristic heavy drapery folds of Burgundian sculpture of the fifteenth century; the other, the mannered elegance of French sculpture in the early sixteenth. The next statue represents Saint Barbara; diagonally opposite is Saint Denis: both are French of the fifteenth century.

At the end of the long gallery is a picturesque grouping of panel paintings and odds and ends of carvings arranged as a setting for a polychromed and gilded recumbent figure of the Virgin in carved wood, which presumably formed part of a group representing the Death of the Virgin. The sculpture is Spanish, of the early sixteenth century.

The beautiful stone statue of the Virgin and Child

FIG. 21. CAPITAL FROM SAINT-GAUDENS

(fig. 22), which stands under the central arch on the south side of the balcony, is best seen from below French sculpture of the fourteenth century is here most happily exemplified. The painted decoration of the statue, although not contemporary with the carving, contributes not a little to the charm of this gracious figure of Our Lady. The stained glass in the window behind this statue is modern. The little fourteenth-century marble figure of a king is said to have come from the Beguinage of Namur.

On the altar to the right are two German wood-carvings of the fifteenth century representing Saint

Luke and Saint James. The subject of the panel painting is Saint Christopher. On the colonnette nearby is a bishop holding a chalice, a French work of the fifteenth century. The polychromed statue of the Virgin and Child, on the altar to the left, is a work of the fourteenth century, from Lorraine. From the same region comes the fifteenth-century statuette of Saint James, mounted on the colonnette to the left.

Next is a group of three graceful French statues of the sixteenth century. The adjacent statue of the Virgin and Child is a notable example of the school of Troyes, dating about 1530 and related in style to the productions of the so-called "atelier of Saint-Leger."

A word in passing must suffice for the rustic Virgin of the Annunciation, diagonally opposite, against the pier. The first of the three sculptures between the Saint-Gaudens columns is a Saint Barbara of the fifteenth century from Lorraine. The impressive fifteenth-century statue of a bishop (perhaps Saint Ignatius of Antioch or Saint Augustine) comes from Caen. The next statue, a French sculpture of about 1500, represents Saint Genevieve of Paris, and is said to have come from the ancient abbey of the Cordeliers, Paris.

At the end of the south gallery is a head of Christ, a fragment of a stone statue, in which the realistic tendency of late Gothic art is clearly seen. On the large Gothic chest is a life-size statue of the Virgin (fig. 23), once probably part of a Nativity group, carved in wood and naturalistically painted. The sensitive modeling of the face is particularly attractive. The date of this sculpture is about 1500; it is presumably Spanish in origin.

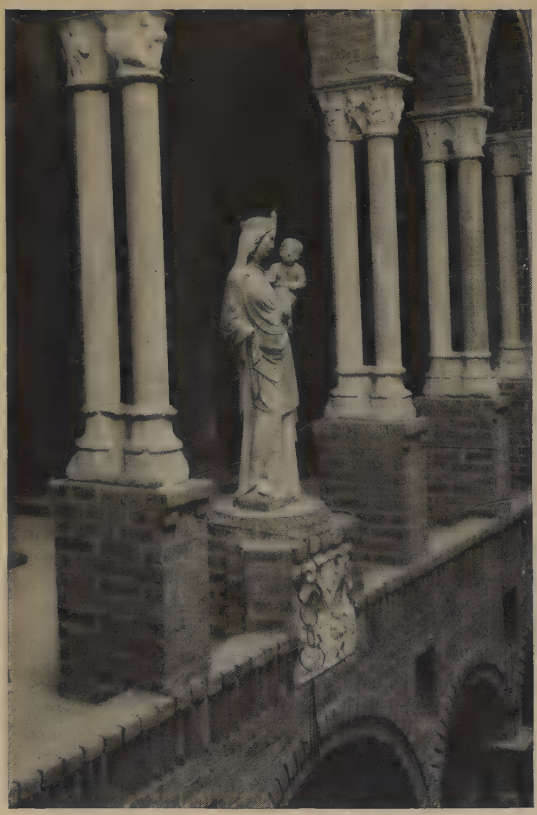


FIG. 22. THE XIV CENTURY VIRGIN
OF THE TRIFORIUM

Descending the stairs, the visitor now turns to his right, and proceeds to the galleries under the balcony. On the way, a small oratory beneath the staircase landing may be noted. Within is a little Pietà group in white marble, a poignant sculpture of the early fifteenth century.

The Galleries under the Triforium

Opposite the entrance to the long gallery on the north side of the Saint-Guilhem arcade is a life-size figure of a bishop with his right hand raised in blessing. This sculpture, a Tuscan work of the fourteenth century, is a notable example of the rare Italian wood-carvings of this period. The painting and gilding with which the statue has been completed are remarkably well preserved.

Several reasons led the mediaeval artist to continue the ancient process of painting and gilding sculpture. This practice brought sculpture into closer harmony with the interiors of churches, richly decorated and glowing with the splendid hues of stained glass. It aided devotion by giving to the representations of sacred personages a heightened impression of reality. Technically, it served a useful purpose in helping to conceal cracks and joints, when the sculpture was of wood. Moreover, in the dim light of the Gothic interior forms are difficult to make out, and the painting of different parts of a statue in contrasting colors assisted recognition. How true this is the visitor may judge for himself from the statues shown in these dusky, candle-lighted galleries under the triforium.

Rarely do we find a Gothic sculpture with its an-

cient polychromy so well preserved as the Tuscan bishop just mentioned. Nearby, placed upon an altar where it is flanked by two Spanish panel paintings with scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist, is a stone statue of the seated Virgin holding the Christ-

FIG. 23. THE KNEELING VIRGIN

child. Only a few traces remain of the painting with which this sculpture was originally covered. It is a German work of the second half of the fourteenth century, very similar in style to a Virgin and Child of about 1370 at Simmerberg. Compare the heavy, tubular drapery folds and the somewhat exaggerated animation of the pose with the refinement of the statue on the balcony over the entrance, a charac-

teristic French work of the fourteenth century. In Europe generally, throughout the Gothic period, the leadership in sculpture clearly rested with France.

FIG. 24. STATUE FROM THE CHAPEL OF RIEUX

The two statues on either side of the seated Virgin are Saint Margaret with the dragon, a French stone sculpture of about 1500, and a stone statue of the Virgin, also French, but of the fourteenth century. The story of Saint Margaret's dragon is that Satan, assuming this form, swallowed the Saint, but immediately burst asunder, so that she escaped unharmed. On the left of the Virgin is a fragment of an early fifteenth-century relief from Pont-à-Mousson, Lorraine, representing the Virgin reclining; originally there was a figure of the Christ-child standing on her lap.

We come now to a mutilated but still beautiful statue in stone, a French sculpture of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, representing a sainted deacon holding a book and the palm of martyrdom (fig. 24). This statue has an unusual interest since it is one of the well-known series of Apostles and other saints made

for the Chapel of Rieux (behind the apse of the Cordeliers' Church at Toulouse), built as a funerary chapel by Jean Tissandier, Bishop of Rieux (1324–48). Fifteen of these statues of saints are now in the Musée des Augustins at Toulouse, together with the tomb effigy of Tissandier and a portrait statue of the Bishop holding a model of his chapel. Two statues in the Bayonne Museum also formed part of this series.

FIG. 25. VIRGIN AND CHILD

The visitor turns now to a typical German wood-carving of about 1500, an altarpiece with doors. Here are represented against a gold background and amidst a profusion of crisply carved ornament the Virgin and Child and a goodly company of saints. To the left is a large stone statue of the Virgin and Child. It is a French sculpture, of the school of Troyes. Although the style is still Gothic, the mannered treatment of the drapery and other particulars indicate a date early in the sixteenth century. Opposite is an ancient stone capital of the eleventh century which has been re-used at some more recent date as a font.

To the left of the entrance, where the ponderous, iron-mounted doors of the Romanesque period deserve attention, is a life-size statue in stone of the Virgin and Child (fig. 25). This beautiful sculpture is a work of the late fourteenth century, quite probably Alsatian in origin. Next is a second large altarpiece of carved wood, painted and gilded, enshrining Our Lady and numerous saints beneath intricately pierced canopies; it is German, about 1500 in date.

Placed upon the altar which occupies a central position in the south aisle is a shrine enclosing an elaborate composition of the Kindred of the Virgin, a Flemish wood-carving of the late fifteenth century. To the right are two stone statues: one, representing Saint Margaret standing on the dragon, is probably Spanish and dates from the fourteenth century; the other, a figure of the Virgin, is a French sculpture of the fourteenth century. Both statues are painted. Corresponding on the left are two statues. The Virgin is a late fourteenth-century sculpture from Vic-sur-Seille, Lorraine. The other statue represents a virgin martyr, carrying an open book and the symbolic palm. It is a fifteenth-century sculpture, probably French. Between these two is a fragment of a gargoyle said to have come from Notre-Dame at Paris.

The Passageway to the Cuxa Cloister

Crossing the south transept, the visitor proceeds to a narrow doorway at the left of the Tuscan fresco of Christ in the tomb. Here begins the passageway lead-

ing to the Cuxa cloister. In this corridor may be noted a life-size statue of the Virgin, a French sculpture of the fourteenth century; a Flemish (Tournai?) stone relief of the fifteenth century (background restored),

FIG. 26. SAINT JAMES
WOOD-CARVING

representing the Virgin enthroned with angels and adored by the members of a devout family; an Italian Renaissance stone relief of the dead Christ supported by angels; and a seated statue of Saint James (fig. 26), a French wood-carving of the fourteenth century, cruder in execution but almost identical with a well-known stone statue (now in the Beauvais Museum)

which was presumably made for some confraternity of the Pilgrims of Saint James and from which ours was probably copied for some other house of the order. The staircase leads to a private room. A small door gives access to the Cuxa cloister.

The Cuxa Cloister

Upon a wide platform, enclosing a garth divided into four parts by intersecting flagged paths, is erected part of the Romanesque stonework of the cloister of the famous monastery of Saint Michael at Cuxa[1] in the Pyrenees. Only one of the short sides of the marble arcade has been set up, but eventually the other three sides will be completed. In the collection are forty-three capitals, numerous abaci, columns, bases, and other architectural fragments from this celebrated cloister; the parts necessary to complete the reconstruction are now being quarried at Prades from the same quarries used by the Romanesque builders. The unpolished marble is light red in color streaked with grayish white. At some future date the four galleries surrounding the garth may be enclosed by walls and covered with a tiled roof.

The section of the arcade (fig. 27) now erected and the capitals and other fragments shown around the garth and in the museum building constitute the greater part, but not all, of the existing remains of the Cuxa cloister. Some capitals and other fragments have been incorporated in the façade of the church at Prades, and the great marble fountain originally in

[1] Three kilometres from Prades (Pyrénées-Orientales) in southeastern France.

FIG. 27. PART OF THE CUXA CLOISTER

the center of the cloister garth is now in a private collection in France. The monumental basin erected in the center of our cloister garden comes from the ruins of a monastery near Cuxa. This magnificent example of Romanesque decorative sculpture, wrought from

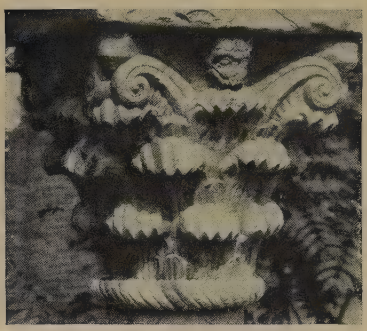


FIG. 28. CAPITAL
FROM CUXA

the same marble as the Cuxa carvings, was acquired by the Museum shortly before the opening of The Cloisters.

Cuxa, now French, was originally Catalan. The successors of Charlemagne, who occupied Catalonia in the ninth century, exercised only nominal suzerainty over this territory, dominated by the counts of Barcelona. By the marriage of Count Raymond Berenger IV of Barcelona in 1137 to Petronilla of Aragon, Catalonia was annexed to Aragon, although the union between these states was frequently severed. The monastery at Cuxa, from the point of view of both architecture and sculpture, is characteristically Catalan of the Romanesque period. The cloister sculptures were executed presumably

in the second half of the twelfth century, probably before 1175.

The Romanesque sculptors had little skill in realistic representation. On the other hand, they excelled in ornament, for which they had an unfailing instinct.

FIG. 29. CAPITAL FROM CUXA

In these Cuxa capitals (figs. 28 and 29) one may observe how successfully the stone carver has combined such motives as human figures and heads, lions, apes, birds, acanthus and other conventionalized foliage, palm trees, vines, bunches of grapes, rosettes, palmettes, and half-palmettes. The carving itself has a rude, vigorous quality perfectly in keeping with the massive architectural forms to be decorated. The planes are simple, clearly defined, rich in light and shade. These magnificently vital capitals are the work of artists who wrought directly in stone with that certainty of hand and vision which distinguishes the masterpieces of Romanesque sculpture.

The royal abbey of Saint Michael and Saint Germain at Cuxa was founded in the ninth century by

some Benedictines from the destroyed monastery of Saint Andrew at Exalada. The date of the foundation is variously given as 801 and (more probably) 878. In the middle of the tenth century the abbey received important benefactions from Seniofret, Count of Cerdaña, who undertook to enlarge the monastery and to provide a more worthy church for the monks. The primitive church of Saint Germain was destroyed apparently at this time to provide the site for the new edifice. It is probable that a consecration which occurred in 953 refers to some small chapel erected for temporary use during the construction of the new building. This new church, of which remains exist today, was consecrated in 974. It was dedicated to Saint Michael, for whom Seniofret had a particular devotion, and to Saint Germain, the titular saint of the earlier church.

The history of the abbey in the two following centuries is marked by material prosperity and spiritual grace. Early in this period, when the sainted Guarinus was abbot, the renown of Cuxa drew to it no less a personage than the Venetian doge, Saint Pietro Orseolo, who joined the community as a humble novice. With him came two hermits, Saint Romuald, founder of the Camaldolese order, and Saint Marinus. Romuald and Marinus eventually returned to Italy, but Orseolo remained at Cuxa, where he died in 997. He was buried in the cloister near the church door. Shortly after, celestial lights appeared about his tomb, and in 1027 he was canonized.

From the middle of the twelfth to the end of the fifteenth century the abbots of Cuxa were invested

FIG. 30. RUINS OF SAINT MICHAEL AT CUXA IN 1834

tals of the church at Serabona. The capitals of the with great secular as well as ecclesiastical authority; but there is little of particular moment to record in the history of the abbey until, on the twenty-seventh of January, 1793, it was sacked and destroyed by the *sans-culottes* of the French Revolution. The church and cloister were stripped. Even the tombstones from the crypt of the abbey were sold. The greater part of the cloister arcade was pulled down at this time and re-erected in the bathing establishment at Prades, where most of the Cuxa sculptures in The Cloisters collection were obtained. The cloister as it appeared in 1834 (fig. 30) is pictured in Baron Taylor's Voyages pittoresques.[1]

As previously noted, these sculptures, with a few possible exceptions, may be assigned in date to the second half of the twelfth century, when the Cuxa cloister appears to have been rebuilt and ornamental portals (see page 28) added to the monastery and church. It is probable that this work was completed during the third quarter of the century. The Abbot Arnald, who ruled from 1188 to 1203, was deposed in the latter year because he had alienated property of the abbey and had permitted the buildings to fall into disrepair. It is improbable therefore that any extensive building operation was carried on during his occupancy of office.

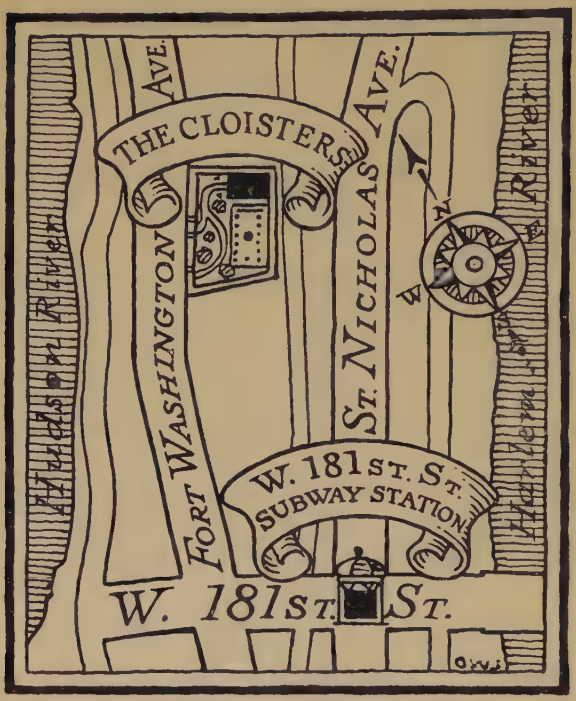
The Cuxa sculptures show close analogies in style and technique with the capitals (about 1175) on the south side of the cloister of Elna, and with the capitals of the church at Serabona. The capitals of the

[1] Taylor, Voyages pittoresques. Languedoc. Vol. 2, part 1, plate 161. Paris, 1835.

tals of the church at Serabona.[1] The capitals of the church at Queralps may also be instanced as similar in style.

The sculptures at Elna and Serabona, and the portal sculptures at Cuxa present the same technical peculiarity: the corners of eyes, mouths, and nostrils are accentuated by the use of a drill, and lead is inserted in the pupils of the eyes. This practice has not been followed by the sculptors of the Cuxa cloister capitals. In other respects, however, the stylistic relationship is evident. An exhaustive study of the remains of this famous abbey has yet to be made.

[1] This church was enlarged in the twelfth century, occasioning a new consecration in 1151. It does not follow, however, that the work was completed at that time. Judging from style alone the capitals may have been executed at any time during the second half of the twelfth century.



MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION
OF THE CLOISTERS

GENERAL INFORMATION

THE Cloisters, a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is situated at 698 Fort Washington Avenue, New York City. See map on page 56.

This branch of the Museum is open until further notice during the same hours as the Museum itself, daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday until 6 p.m.; Sunday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Admission is free except on Mondays and Fridays, when a fee of 25 cents is charged to all except members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and holders of complimentary tickets. Members are admitted on pay days on presentation of their tickets. Persons holding members' complimentary tickets are entitled to one admission on a pay day.

Children under twelve years of age are not admitted unless accompanied by an adult.

Visitors desiring special direction or assistance in studying the collection may secure the services of a Museum instructor by appointment, made by application to the Director of Educational Work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This service is free to members and to teachers in the public schools of New York City, as well as to pupils under their guidance. To all others a charge of $1 an hour is made with an additional fee of 25 cents for each person in a group exceeding four in number. The number of persons visiting The Cloisters in a group is limited to twenty.

Requests for permission to copy and to photograph should be addressed to the Secretary, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. No permits are necessary for sketching and for taking snapshots with hand cameras. Permits are issued for all days except Saturday afternoons, Sundays, and legal holidays.

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... The Cloisters, a brief guide, by Joseph Breck ... New York, 1926.

x, 58 p., 1 l. illus. 22cm.

At head of title: The Metropolitan museum of art.
"Of this guide 2000 copies were printed, April, 1926."

1. Art, Medieval. 2. Art—New York (City) 1. Breck, Joseph, 1885–

336549

26-16675

Library of Congress N611.C6 1926 CCSC/ej